



Department of Commerce Safety Report

May 2003

Safety Report May 2003

Introduction

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for May 2003. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in May 2003. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for April 2003, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts. Section Four, Survey Results, provides the May results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program Web Site.

Section One: Program Initiatives

Bureau Safety Goals and Measures:

As part of Commerce's commitment to our employees as our most valuable resource, we must stress the importance of improving health and safety throughout the organization. Thus, the Department will ask a number of bureaus to provide presentations about performance goals for their representative organizations that address two key strategic objectives. Those objectives are:

1. Eliminating Workplace Injuries
2. Creating a Total Safety Culture

Presentations by selected bureaus will be made at the next Commerce Safety Council meeting

Commerce Facility Inspections:

The Commerce Office of Occupational Safety and Health is reminding managers that inspections of their facilities must be conducted at least annually to ensure safe and healthful workplaces for employees, and to comply with Federal safety and health regulations. Safety inspection checklists were developed to assist program managers and are available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safetyforms.htm>. The checklists include short and long

versions. The long version is intended to acquaint employees with the variety of safety issues identified in work spaces. Managers may use the checklist as provided, or use it to develop their own. The short version focuses upon the most common types of safety issues.

Section Two: Significant Safety Issues

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

On May 20, 2003, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lifted the travel alert it had established for Toronto, Ontario, Canada. At that time, more than 30 days (or three SARS incubation periods) had elapsed since the date of onset of symptoms for the last case. On May 22, 2003, Health Canada reported a new hospital-based cluster of probable and suspect SARS cases; consequently CDC reissued a travel alert for Toronto. The transmission in Toronto, which is under investigation, thus far involves predominantly patients and health-care workers at several hospitals. The names of these hospitals and dates of potential at-risk exposure are available at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgsp/sars-sras/eu-ac/sars20030525_e.html.

In response to the SARS epidemic, CDC has issued two types of notices to travelers: advisories and alerts. A travel advisory recommends that nonessential travel be deferred; a travel alert does not advise against travel but informs travelers of a health concern and provides advice about specific precautions. Definitions and criteria for travel alerts versus advisories and guidelines for changing notices are available at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/travel_alertadvisory.htm.

CDC again recommends that U.S. travelers to Toronto observe precautions to safeguard their health. This includes avoidance of settings where SARS is most likely to be transmitted, such as health-care facilities caring for SARS patients. CDC does not recommend the routine use of masks or other personal protective equipment while in public areas.

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. The information below reflects April 2003 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

Incidence Rate: The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and is calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH} (200,000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year ¹
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

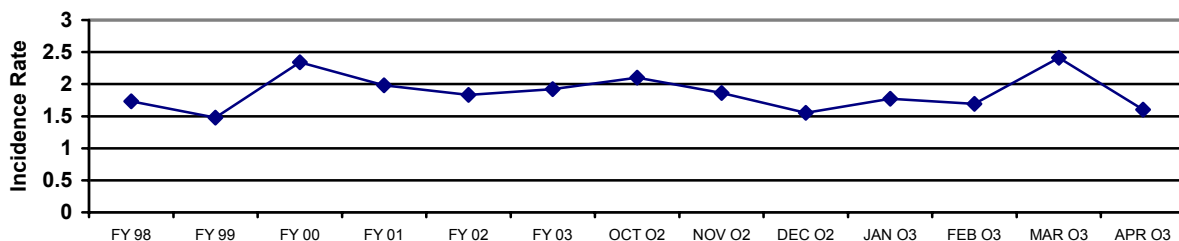
¹ The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours.

The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, including those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, the incident rates from those records are not directly comparable to industry trends, since they include many minor injuries and illnesses that are not considered "work-related" under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for private industry. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

For comparative purposes, table 1A, included as page nine of this report, provides data that more closely correspond to the recordable injury criteria. The remaining tables and charts include data for all cases submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

Chart 1

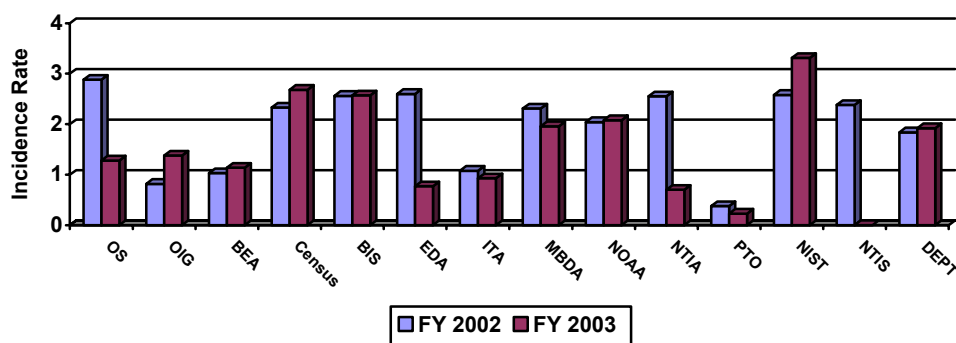
Total Case Incidence Rate Trend



Major Findings include:

- **The FY 2003 Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) for Commerce is higher than the rate for FY 2002, but down from FY 2001.** The TCIR is 1.92 for FY 2003, 1.84 for FY 2002, and 1.98 for FY 2001. The increased number of injuries reported for March 2003 drove up the incident rate for the year. Several exposure injuries were reported from cleaning activities at the Census building in Hagerstown, Maryland. A total of 377 Workers' Compensation claims were submitted thus far for FY 2003.
- **Of the larger bureaus, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Bureau of the Census have higher TCIRs for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002 (see table 1 and chart 2).** NIST has seen a rash of injuries recently, from cuts, slips and falls, and exertion. Also, a number of the recent injuries occurred at the Bureau of the Census, with several illnesses resulting from exposure to vapors from a cleaning agent.
- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), and the National Technical Information Service have significantly lower TCIRs for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002.**
- **The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) for Commerce is down from previous years.** The TRCIRs for Commerce are 1.38 for FY 2003, 1.60 in FY 2002, and 1.72 in FY 2001.

Chart 2



Types of Injuries: Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses is essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 4 and 5, and tables 2 and 2A.

Key findings are explained below:

- **“Slips/Falls” continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** “Slips/falls” accounted for 36 percent of all injuries within the Department for FY 2002 and for 24 percent in April 2003. Many of the recent slips and falls were weather-related. More attention must be given to walking surfaces to reduce injuries from slips and falls. Floors that are wet from mopping must have highly visible warning signs, so employees know to avoid those areas. Trips from cords strung across floors continue to cause injuries. Telephone lines, electrical cords, and other cords should be routed away from walking areas.
- **“Struck and Contact” injuries were second in frequency for April 2003.** These injuries combined for 21 percent of those reported for FY 2002 and for 26 percent in April 2003. A majority of the injuries were caused when employees struck open drawers, doors, or low overhead clearances. Those injuries can be avoided by closing drawers that are not being used. Employees should also be aware of their surroundings and use caution. Low overhead clearances should be marked with highly visible paint or tape.
- **“Exertion” injuries remain a concern.** “Exertion” injuries were 20 percent and 36 percent of total injuries for FY 2002 and April 2003, respectively. To prevent back injuries, employees should use carts to move objects and avoid carrying them by hand. The proper lifting technique includes keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs. For jobs that require repetitive motion, an ergonomics assessment should be conducted.
- **“Exposures” were evident as well.** Exposures accounted for five percent of the injuries or illnesses reported in FY 2002. No exposure injuries were reported for April 2003. Most exposure illnesses can be prevented through proper ventilation and use of personal protective equipment.

Chart 4
Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for
FY 2002

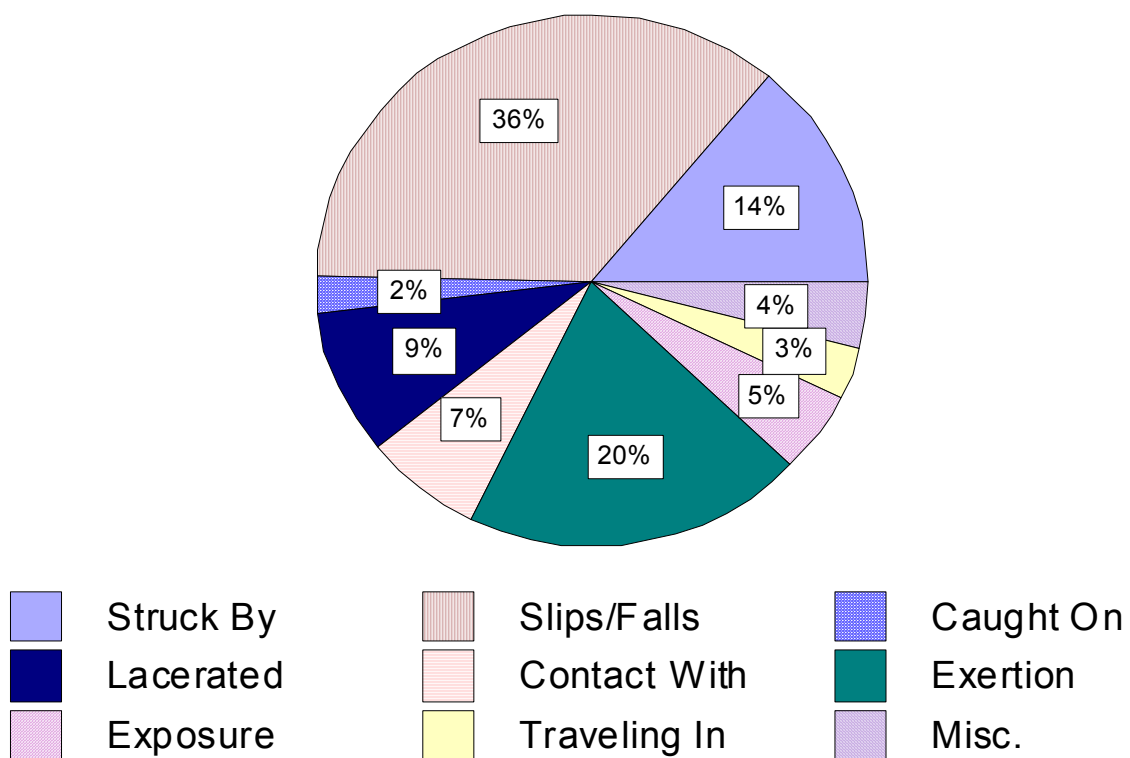
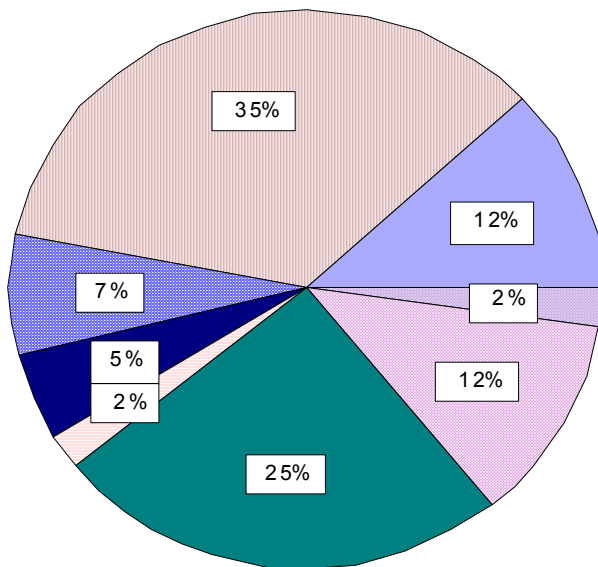


Chart 5

Injury Type As Percentage Of Total Injuries

MARCH



APRIL

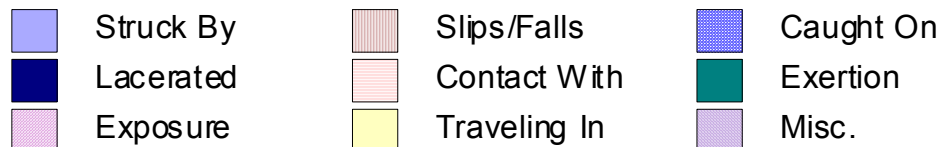
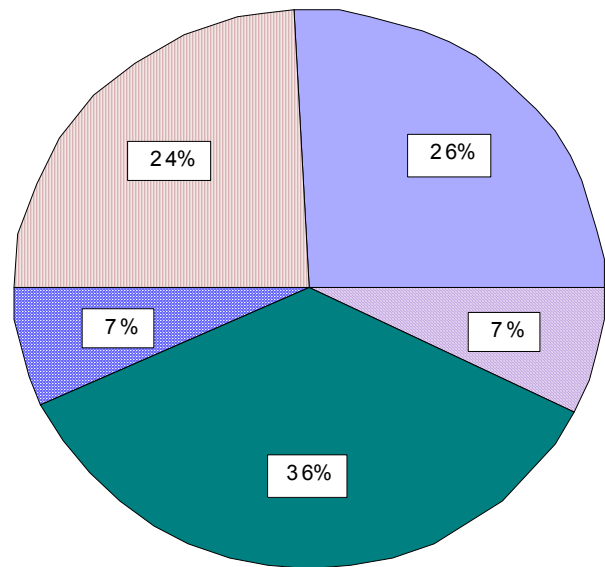


TABLE 1
TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		March 2003		April 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	35	3.94	22	2.47	23	2.88	1	1.49	0	0	6	1.28
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	4	2.98	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	1	1.38
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.75	4	0.88	1	0.23	5	1.12	4	1.03	0	0	1	2.67	3	1.14
Bureau of the Census	282	1.34	311	1.04	383	2.83	393	2.41	241	2.33	40	4.99	13	1.64	149	2.68
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.02	11	3.08	15	4.06	9	2.44	9	2.56	0	0	0	0	5	2.57
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	9	3.67	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	1	0.77
International Trade Administration	26	1.33	18	0.92	24	1.23	12	0.62	18	1.08	1	0.72	1	0.72	9	0.93
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	3	3.40	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	1	1.96
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	307	2.69	247	2.18	228	2.04	19	2.03	19	2.03	136	2.08
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	7	3.03	6	2.55	0	0	0	0	1	0.70
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.73	27	0.47	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	2	0.40	0	0	8	0.23
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4.65
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.57	84	2.87	79	2.82	68	2.34	76	2.58	5	2.07	11	4.55	56	3.31
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	6	2.61	4	2.15	1	0.52	4	2.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	778	1.73	811	1.48	890	2.34	807	1.98	642	1.84	68	2.41	45	1.60	377	1.92
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

TABLE 1A
TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE*

	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		March 2003		April 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	Actual															
Bureau	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	30	3.38	17	1.91	22	2.75	1	1.49	0	0	6	1.28
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	1	0.66	3	2.24	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	1	1.38
Bureau of Economic Analysis	7	1.53	4	0.88	0	0	5	1.12	3	0.77	0	0	1	2.67	2	0.76
Bureau of the Census	244	1.15	288	0.96	345	2.55	332	2.04	212	2.05	18	2.25	11	1.39	97	1.74
Bureau of Industry and Security	8	2.42	10	2.80	13	3.52	8	2.17	9	2.56	0	0	0	0	5	2.57
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	8	3.26	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	24	1.23	17	0.86	22	1.13	11	0.57	10	0.60	1	0.72	1	0.72	9	0.93
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	2	2.27	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	1	1.96
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	260	2.34	275	2.41	289	2.53	225	1.98	203	1.81	14	1.50	14	1.50	110	1.68
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	5	2.16	3	1.27	0	0	0	0	1	0.70
Patent and Trademark Office	35	0.67	26	0.45	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	2	0.40	0	0	8	0.23
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4.65
National Institute of Standards and Technology	87	2.96	76	2.60	66	2.36	55	1.89	59	2.00	1	0.41	8	3.31	31	1.83
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	5	2.18	4	2.15	1	0.52	3	1.78	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	694	1.54	732	1.34	809	2.13	702	1.72	557	1.60	37	1.31	35	1.24	272	1.38
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through April 2003)**

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	24	29	33	56	27	19	16	8	12	6	4	4	1	1	3	5	2	1	251
Falls/Slips	72	59	40	153	96	67	19	22	18	13	7	2	5	7	4	10	2	1	597
Caught On An Object	4	5	8	9	8	3	1	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	51
Cuts/Bites	20	26	3	36	19	8	12	9	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	141
Contact With An Object	13	19	2	24	11	3	1	6	0	6	6	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	97
Exertion/ Motion	64	64	40	54	37	34	7	17	12	3	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	3	344
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	13	9	3	7	6	11	3	3	3	0	1	0	1	6	1	0	12	0	79
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	10	0	10	16	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	43
Miscellaneous*	2	7	7	8	21	4	1	8	4	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	67
TOTAL	216	228	136	357	241	149	60	76	56	31	24	8	10	18	9	22	23	6	1670

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

Table 2A

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through April 2003)**

BUREAU	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	15
Falls/Slips	2	0	1	2	2	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	3	1	0	6	0	1	35
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	7
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	11
Exposure to Chemicals/ Elements	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Miscellaneous*	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
Total	2	1	1	5	4	3	5	6	1	0	0	1	1	4	0	7	6	1	4	2	1	8	9	5	77

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

Section Four: Survey Results

We continue to receive comments through the Safety Survey Web Site. We are using employee comments to help shape a safety program responsive to employee issues and concerns. The Web Site can be accessed through the Office of Human Resources Management Homepage at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/>.

Safety Survey Statistics

We received 16 responses through the Web Site survey. The following tables provide some data regarding the distribution of responses by bureau and general geographical area, as well as general safety impressions.

Safety Survey May Results

Have you experienced a safety lapse in your work area during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	10	62.50%
Yes	6	37.50%

Have you noticed any safety improvements in your work area or in the Department as a whole during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	5	31.25%
Yes	10	62.50%
No Answer	1	6.25%

Geographical Location		
State	Count	Percent
DC	1	6.25%
MD	9	56.25%
MI	1	6.25%
NY	1	6.25%
SC	1	6.25%
TX	1	6.25%
VA	1	6.25%
WA	1	6.25%

Bureau Breakdown		
Answer	Count	Percent
CENSUS	2	12.50%
CFO/ASA	1	6.25%
EDA	1	6.25%
NIST	2	5.55%
NOAA	8	50.00%
OS	1	6.25%
PTO	1	6.25%